

**NEWS ALERT**



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Homeland Security Committee**

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“An Overview of Issues and Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security”**

February 7, 2007 (WASHINGTON) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee Hearing entitled “An Overview of Issues and Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security”:

“Today we will hear testimony from two distinguished witnesses. Combined, they have written hundreds of reports detailing the problems and challenges facing the Department of Homeland Security.

From the outset, it was clear that the transformation of 22 agencies into one unified Department would be a major challenge. But we expected that by the fourth year of this endeavor, the Department would be well on the path to stability. Regrettably, instead DHS seems to be wandering aimlessly toward an uncertain destination.

It is because of DHS’ importance to our nation’s security that we must not allow basic problems of organizational structure and administrative weakness to continue to hamper its ability to accomplish its mission.

Unfortunately, that is what appears to be happening.

In Hurricane Katrina, we saw first-hand that the failure to get routine management, procurement, and financial systems under control can and does hinder and sometimes even halts the ability of this agency to get the job done. The kind of dysfunction that occurred in response to Hurricane Katrina cannot become standard practice for this Department.

It will take aggressive oversight to get DHS on track. Our combined efforts—Congress, GAO and the Inspector General—are vital if the Department is to become the kind of agency the American people deserve.

And that is the purpose of today's hearing—to have a frank discussion about the areas this Committee needs to focus on during the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. Let me just say, I am troubled that the Department is on GAO's 2007 HIGH RISK list. But I have to admit that it comes as no surprise. The Department was on the last HIGH RISK list, published in 2005. However, I am surprised to learn that the Department has not even taken the first step to get off the list. They have not provided GAO with a complete corrective action plan. On Friday, Mr. Chertoff will be here. I intend to ask him when corrective action plans will be provided to GAO. I know that writing these plans may be hard, but every journey must start with a single step.

I am also concerned that the IG has repeatedly found problems with the Department's financial management. This Department has never produced a clean financial statement. The American taxpayers expect a federal agency to be able to report how it is spending our money. I think we in Congress share that expectation.”

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